



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Protect Yourself, Protect Your Pets with Rabies Vaccination Maryland Recognizes “World Rabies Day”

BALTIMORE, MD (September 26, 2011) – September 28th is the fifth annual **World Rabies Day**, a worldwide event to raise awareness about the impact of rabies in humans and animals, according to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Rabies in humans is one hundred percent preventable through prompt appropriate medical care. Still, more than 55,000 people die of the disease each year, mostly in areas of the world that still have the "dog-to-dog" type of rabies transmission.

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. When a rabid animal bites a person, the disease is prevented with a four-dose rabies vaccine series administered over a period of 14 days, and a dose of rabies immunoglobulin given at the beginning of the series.

Although there has not been a human case of rabies in Maryland since 1976, each year approximately 400 animals are confirmed rabid in the State and over 1,000 Maryland residents received rabies vaccination after being exposed to a rabid animal. So far this year, 224 animals have been confirmed rabid in Maryland. While wildlife species (most commonly raccoons, bats and foxes) account for the majority of confirmed rabid animals, cats are the most common rabid domestic animal reported in Maryland.

“Rabies is a preventable viral disease transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal,” said Heather Hauck, Director of the DHMH Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration. “Maryland residents should protect themselves and their pets by having their pets vaccinated against rabies.”

All Maryland local health departments offer low-cost animal rabies vaccination clinics. In honor of World Rabies Day, some counties, including Harford and Worcester counties, are offering low-cost animal rabies vaccination clinics on or around September 28.

Remember these steps to protect yourself and your pets from rabies:

- Vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and other animals against rabies.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance.
- Do not let pets roam free.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not leave pet food outside.
- Prevent bats from entering your home. If you find a bat in your home, do not touch it. Only let it go if you are absolutely sure no people or household pets have had any contact with it. If it is alive, you can catch it by placing a small box, bowl, or can over the bat once it has landed to roost, and then slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container and contact your local health department.
- If you or your pet has been exposed to a rabid or suspected rabid domestic animal, get the owner's name, address and telephone number.
- Contact your local health department or animal control agency in the event of an exposure.

To learn more about rabies in Maryland, including rabies surveillance statistics and efforts to prevent and control the disease, please visit the DHMH website <http://ideha.dhmh.maryland.gov/CZVBD/rabies.aspx> . For information on low-cost animal rabies vaccination clinics in your county, please contact your local health department or visit their website. To learn more about World Rabies Day please visit: www.worldrabiesday.org.

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